



"TO CARE FOR HIM WHO HAS BORNE THE BATTLE, AND FOR HIS WIDOW AND ORPHANS."

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The Boy Duke.

A Tale of the 10th Century.

"ERIC OF ARRAS."

"Put My Promise of True Allegiance to the Proof."

"REMOVE HIS MANACLES."

"Tis no Blame to Him That I am Fatherless."

BY FRANCES WILSON ("FANNIE WILLIAMS"),
Author of "Harry Redfern, the Young Machine,"
"Anthony Rike, a Boy of the Period,"
"Dick Leslie's Life in Texas," "The Boys of
Brythwaite School," "Roland Robt," "Prince
Olaf," "The Land Beyond the Golden Gate,"
"Lancelot, the Child of the Storm," etc.

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CHAPTER XIII.
ERIC OF ARRAS.

ALL appearance of satisfaction vanished from the bearing of Bothon and Sir Ivo from the moment when they recognized as Alan's guest the Count of Blois; and they stood with darkened faces looking on, while Richard was presented to the Lady of Nantes and her two fair daughters, each of whom, and all the noble ladies in their company, seemed greatly to admire the graceful deportment and boyish yet commanding person of the young Norman Duke.

Richard took pains to make a favorable impression, without forgetting the dignity of his position as Alan's feudal Lord, but with all the honors paid him and all the splendor of Alan's crowded hall, the music, the banquet making ready, the smiling Breton ladies, the bowing Breton Lords, yet in his heart he felt both sad and anxious.

He was impatient for the moment to arrive when he might speak to Alan of the hapless Flemish youth, on whose account his journey had been undertaken; for it made him unhappy to remember, as he viewed that festive scene, that in some dungeon, dark and damp, beneath those castle walls, poor Eric of Arras lay half-starved and shivering with cold, his moans unheeded and his tears unshed, while the laughter and the music resounded gaily in the hall above. The contrast seemed so cruel in Richard's mind that he was more than ever resolved to save the unoffending young Fleming, let the cost be what it might.

Richard had not observed the Frenchman, whose presence in the hall had so displeased his loyal Danes; and Osmond of Centoville, who kept, as usual, close beside his Lord, and did not hear the remarks which passed between Sir Ivo and Bothon, though he had perceived the stranger and wondered a little to see a French noble at Nantes, felt no concern whatever, as he knew the knightman of the Breton Lord.

All the Breton Lords were interested in the youthful son of Longsword, beneath whose banner they expected, at no very distant day, to be marshaled for war; and Richard gave them his attention, outwardly at least, though all his thoughts were with the hapless Eric.

In the meantime great preparations were going forward in the lower part of the hall for the usual feast in honor of so distinguished a guest.

CROWDS OF RETAINERS WERE CONSTANTLY COMING AND GOING, engaged in getting the viands ready and setting up the board; and brisk officials moved around among them, giving orders. As the day declined the dark hall grew darker, and the light of the hearth-fires, except in their immediate neighborhood, was not sufficient to dispel the deepening gloom; and the servants began lighting up the vast, high-vaulted room with tall flambeaux, which were placed in iron supports along the walls, provided for this purpose. Two rows of these great, flaring torches, down the sides of the hall, sent up their black smoke to the rafters and cast their flickering light upon the scene; throwing weird, fantastic shadows also, like ghostly figures of gigantic size, that danced and shifted strangely overhead.

When the board was laid for supper, and the chief director of the feast announced that his Lord was served, the Duke of Brittany conducted Richard to his own place at the head of the table; and Gareth, his heir, assisted Osmond in waiting on the Boy Duke.

The banquet, like any other banquet of the time, in any other castle or hall, was marked by rude abundance and rude manners equally, and soon became a scene of noisy revelry.

A customary feature, common to all occasions of the kind, was the frequency with which the drinking-cups were filled and emptied; for the practice of what would now be called very hard drinking, was looked

upon as more a virtue than a vice in those days. In Alan's hall they drank the wines of Italy and Southern France; while the Normans at Bayeux and Centoville were wont to fill their beakers with the foaming mead, the national beverage of their ancestors, the Danes, a people who held it as a point of honor to imbibe enormous quantities of this drink whenever they were feasting. But, if the favored potation was not the same in all places, there was no difference in the effect which it produced; for the Norman soldiers became as uproarious over Alan's wine as if they had been drinking mead around the board of Bothon of Bayeux.

It may be said of Richard, who was noted throughout his life for his abstemious habits, that he did not like these tumultuous orgies; and, as a mark of homage and respect for his example, his chief liegemen refrained from carrying their drinking customs to the usual excess when he was present. The Duke of Brittany—who bore the reputation of being able to vanquish, in a hand-



RICHARD PLEADING FOR ERIC.

to-hand fight or in a drinking bout, each and every Lord of those days paid him homage—on this occasion imitated Bothon and Sir Ivo in following their young Lord's example of abstinence; much to the satisfaction of the Boy Duke, who had feared that Alan, when the banquet ended, would be so flushed with wine as to be in no fit mood for hearing an appeal in favor of his doomed young hostage.

Richard left the banquet-board when the Lady of Nantes and her daughters arose, and with the other ladies withdrew from the hall. He was followed at once by Alan the Duke and all the nobles who had been seated with him at the board; while the common crowd of retainers—the small army of servants and soldiers who belonged to Alan, and all the throng of underlings and men-at-arms in attendance on the great Lords gathered there—kept up the feasting and the revel to a late hour of the night.

The Boy Duke and his Breton subject seated themselves beside the blazing hearth, and Osmond the Squire placed himself at Richard's elbow, as was his privilege and duty at all times; but no one else drew near, though Bothon and Sir Ivo kept their eyes upon their Lord, and Alan's nobles lost no word of what he said. It was their undoubted right to listen, for if he was called to battle, they must all prepare to follow. No one supposed for a moment that the Duke of Normandy had come to Nantes for any other purpose than to summon his vassal Duke to war.

"And now, my Lord," said Alan, "if you will

PUT MY PROMISE OF TRUE ALLEGIANCE TO THE PROOF,

I await your commands."

Richard, who had been debating in his mind how best he might approach the subject of his errand at Nantes, when the way was thus abruptly opened, hardly found himself prepared to speak at once. Alan added:

"If you desire my service in battle, I am ready, my Lord, let your foes be whom they may."

After a moment of silence, Richard, looking frankly at the Breton Duke, replied:

"I thank you, Duke; and doubtless the time is not far distant when I shall be glad to avail myself of the willing aid you offer, though I do not need it yet. I am here, not to seek your help in battle, but to ask a boon of you."

"A boon, my Lord?"

"A boon," replied Richard, "which, perhaps, when I have named it, you will not be so ready to grant me."

"Say not so!" exclaimed the Breton. "Do you doubt my friendship, Richard?"

"If I did," said Richard, gravely, "should I now be here in your castle-hall, Duke Alan?"

"Shrewdly spoken, my young Lord!" laughed Alan, who, though not a little gratified by Richard's trust in him, as proved by his coming to Nantes, was shrewd enough himself to know that the Boy Duke could not have taken such a step without some opposition. He added, dryly: "Tis a wonder that Bernard de Harcourt permitted you to come."

Richard replied, with simple dignity: "Count Bernard offered to come with me, but I did not think it needful—especially as he had urgent affairs to keep him at Bayeux."

"Well, my Lord, you shall have no reason to regret that you came to me as to a friend," said Alan, heartily. "Tell me, in what manner can I serve you?"

Richard answered:

"I will tell you in a few words, Duke. My errand here concerns your Flemish hostage, Count Eric of Arras."

"And what of him?" asked the Breton Duke, surprised.

"I am informed," said Richard, "that you have cast him into prison, and sent word to Flanders that his life must pay the forfeit for those two Barons whom you held in keeping, and who recently escaped."

"Ay," said Alan, with a grim smile, "and three days hence he hangs, unless Count

Arnulf sends me back the Barons, or two other hostages of equal rank!"

"No, Alan, not so!" said the Boy Duke, boldly; "not so, if you spoke sincerely when you said you would not fail me, whatever I might ask of you."

I ASK YOU TO SPARE COUNT ERIC'S LIFE! As Richard spoke these words, he heard a low but ardent exclamation, and turning his head he saw young Gareth of Nantes, Alan's son, who had started from his place among the noble Squires, and taken a step forward, checking his impetuous movement, however, as he remembered the respect which was due to his father's liege Lord. Gareth's eyes were sparkling, and his face was full of eagerness; but Alan looked astounded.

"What, you, my Lord!" he cried. "You ask me to spare him! Do you forget whose son he is?"

"No, Duke, I do not forget."

"He is the son of your father's murderer!" said Alan, sternly.

Richard, easily but calmly, rejoined:

"I know it; and as such, Duke Alan, I have promised to save him, if it lies within my power."

"To whom did you give that promise, my Lord?" inquired the Breton, with a darkening brow.

Richard answered:

"To Eric's foster-father, a good burgher of Arras, who brought him up from infancy, and loved him well enough to take the peril of a journey to Bayeux, in the hope of moving him to help him. If you had seen the anguish of that good old man, Duke Alan, you would not wonder that my heart was touched, and that I told him I would come to Nantes myself, and intercede with you to spare the poor young Count. I trust I shall not plead in vain; 't would be a cruel thing, for no guilt of his own, to take the life of one so young, so brave and yet so gentle—for so the burgher spoke of him. And though he is the son of Arnulf, it is not unseemly, Duke, for me to take his part. He is a boy like myself, and 't is no blame to him that I am fatherless."

The young Duke spoke these words with all the simple pathos of a boy's entreaty for another boy in trouble, and yet in tones made resolute by the knowledge of his power to command, if his entreaties failed. His face and his voice, alike, were earnest with the noble impulse which moved his youthful heart, though his clear accents faltered, for a moment, when he alluded to the sad loss of his father; and Alan, who had listened with a sullen look, at first, relaxed the stern expression of his countenance, as he remarked:

"I see, my Lord, this burgher well knew how to work upon your feelings; and I blame you not. It would be strange, indeed, if your father's son could be hard-hearted, at your age; but arguments of such a nature cannot alter my resolve. If the burgher wished to save Count Eric, he should have gone to Arnulf with his plea. The boy would be as safe in Brittany as he could be in Arras, if his father would but send me back my hostages."

"The burgher says Count Arnulf will not do that," said Richard; "or, perhaps, he cannot. Has he not sent you any word whatever, in answer to your warning?"

"None, my Lord."

"And yet," said Richard, in a serious tone, "it seems a hard thing to believe that even Arnulf the Wicked, after sending his innocent son to answer for his own evil deed, can leave him now to perish, and make no attempt to save him. It may be that, even yet, he will send you back the Barons. Do you think he will, Duke Alan?"

"Not he," returned the Breton Duke.

"Arnulf has better use for all his Barons, in these uneasy times." He added—and prefixed the sentence with a vigorous adjuration, addressed to the patron saint of Nantes



ERIC AND HIS JAILER.

"—Count Eric will hang, fast enough! I am not wont to palter in such a matter, and trifle with my word; and Arnulf knows it well. It is clear enough he intends to sacrifice his son to save his Barons."

Richard perceived with disappointment that all his pleading in the name of mercy and humanity had no effect upon his Breton vassal. Evidently, Alan looked upon such lenient sentiments as pardonable, and even proper, to the enthusiasm of soft-hearted youth, but not to be considered for a moment in deciding an important question of feudal policy. He continued:

"I have given the Count of Flanders full time and fair warning, and now, if I fail to fulfill what I have threatened, my demands will meet with small respect hereafter, in Flanders or anywhere else."

"Then you will not spare the Flemish boy, as a boon to me, Duke Alan, though you promised to refuse me nothing?" Richard said, reproachfully.

"Nay, my Lord, but this would be no service; it would rather be an injury to you," said Alan; "for your enemies would take it as a token of your weakness. They would think you are afraid of Arnulf!"

"LET MY ENEMIES THINK WHAT THEY PLEASE;

I fear neither Arnulf the Wicked nor his

friend, the Count of Blois," was Richard's dignified response.

He was about to speak further, but a look of sudden recollection crossed the face of Alan, and he interrupted, in a low tone of voice:

"Your words, my Lord, remind me that I have here a guest who came unbidden, and, until this moment, I had forgotten his presence. You will be scarcely pleased to see him here, yet I believe his errand is the same as your own."

And Alan looked around among his guests and followers on the dais, and sent a searching glance down the long, crowded hall, where the feast was still in progress and the revel at its height; but the gaily-attired Frenchman was nowhere to be seen. He had slipped away from the banquet, unperceived by anyone save Bothon and Sir Ivo, who both, from the moment when they first caught sight of him, had watched him with suspicious eyes, until they saw him leave the hall.

"I see him not," said Alan. "Doubtless he has withdrawn himself, in dread of your displeasure, my Lord, if you beheld him here. In truth, I never saw a man so ill at ease as he was, when he learned that we were momentarily expecting your arrival."

"What guest is this of whom you speak?" asked Richard, in surprise.

Alan answered:

"A French Lord, who arrived at Nantes this morning; a kinsman of the Count of Blois, and a strange visitor for you to meet with under my roof. Richard, I have had no opportunity for speech with him as yet; and I doubt not he would have gone away at once, when he heard of your coming, had I not constrained him to remain until I should have time to learn the object of his visit. I wondered what your enemy's near kinsman could want here, my Lord, in the hall of your true vassal; but now methinks I understand it. The Count of Flanders and the Count of Blois are allies, as you say; and Theobald, perhaps, has sent his cousin hither to offer terms of ransom for the life of Arnulf's son."

"If so," said Richard, "the Count of Blois and I, for once, are in accord. Yet I fear you will hardly consent to make terms with him when my entreaties fail to move you, Alan."

"No," said Alan, grimly; "not unless he offers me two hostages as good as those two Barons—and that, assuredly, he will not do. But, my Lord, you are not the only one who has appealed to me on behalf of this young Fleming. Here is Gareth, my son, has weariest me with such entreaties, until I was forced to silence him with harsh words, and forbid his naming Count Eric in my presence."

Richard, with a bright smile, turned to Gareth, saying:

"THEN YOU ALSO ARE SORRY FOR HIM, GARETH?"

"More than sorry, my Lord," said Gareth, mournfully. "I am grieved for him, as I should be for any poor youth in his unhappy situation; but I love Eric for his own sake. He and I have been good friends ever since he came to Nantes."

"Then he has not been unhappy here?" said Richard. "When he was with you in the hall, I mean."

Gareth answered, simply:

"My Lord, he was a stranger in a strange land, far away from his home and all his friends; he must have been often sad at heart—but he never showed it. He always bore himself as cheerfully as any born retainer in our hall. That burgher of Arras told the truth—Eric is brave as well as gentle, and courteous as a Prince. He looks as noble as he is, my Lord; if you could see him, you would not wonder that he seems to me more like a younger brother than a stranger and a hostage."

"I should like to see him," said Richard, looking at the Duke of Brittany.

"You shall, my Lord, if you desire it," answered Alan.

He summoned an official of the castle, and bade him go and tell the warder of the cells to bring out the imprisoned Flemish hostage and conduct him to the hall.

As the official departed to carry out this order, Richard, turning his glance again on Gareth, observed that the young Breton's eyes were wet with tears; and he said, within himself:

"When Gareth rules in Brittany there will be little use for dungeon-cells beneath his castle; he is not like his stern, hard-hearted father."

So thought the Boy Duke, as he gazed on Alan's son, whose manly face and graceful, stately form, showed him well worthy of his warrior sire, though he had a gentle heart. But, ah! how sad would Richard's heart have grown, could he have looked into the future, at that moment, and seen what lay in store for this young, gallant soul—for Gareth never ruled in Brittany. Long years before Duke Alan died, his eldest son lay sleeping in a warrior's grave; for he perished fighting bravely in Richard's cause, a youthful knight, "without reproach or fear."

If we search for Gareth's name in history we shall only find the record of the great, victorious battle where he fell; an event to which all things were tending, in the lives of our boy hero and his friends, and to which this narrative must also come in due time—the closing scene, alike, of Gareth's life and Norman Richard's boyhood.

It is well, however, that the future is not revealed to human eyes, till it becomes the present; and Richard, therefore, was neither elated by any fore-knowledge of its glory, nor saddened by any premonition of its woe.

His reflections on the strange difference between Duke Alan's granite hardness and the merciful and kindly disposition of his son, were terminated by the entrance of Alan's official and the young Flemish Count, conducted by his jailer. The latter, a huge, dark-visaged Breton churl, whose lowering brows and harsh, forbidding features produced on the beholder an impression of pitiless rigor and severity, came forward with his captive to the dais-steps, and there stood, with his hand upon the prisoner's shoulder,

silently awaiting further orders. Alan, however, did not speak to him, but said, sternly, to the Flemish boy:

"Come nearer, Count Eric."

The captive youth advanced, without a word, and stood before the Breton Duke and his Boy Lord, on the dais. He tried to hold up his head, and to show a brave spirit, in spite of his unmerited misfortunes; and, meeting Gareth's eyes, he smiled, as if pleased to see his friend; but his wrists were shackled with heavy links of iron, while his pale and worn young face, made paler in appearance by the black hair, unkempt and tangled, which overlung his forehead, told a plain tale of cruel suffering. His slender frame, weakened by confinement and long-fasting, was hardly able to support the chain that weighed him down.

CHAPTER XIV.

ALAN'S SON AND LONGSWORD'S.

Richard's heart swelled with compassion, as the young Fleming stood before him, bowed and trembling with the burden of fetters and the weakness of his limbs, yet princely and courageous, even as Gareth called him; and the Boy Duke determined, in his own mind that never should this noble youth go back to the dungeon-cell from which he had emerged. He said to his Breton vassal:

"Duke Alan, I see no need of these heavy shackles on the hands of a prisoner so closely guarded, and he has not strength to bear them. At my desire, will you not have them taken off?"

Alan's face clouded once more, and it was evident from the tone of his reply that he was losing patience with what he regarded as Richard's foolish pity for the ill-fated hostage.

"I have refused my son that same request," he answered.

"But I trust," said Richard, calmly, "you will not refuse my Lord."

He spoke no longer in the manner of appeal, for he had inwardly decided that he should be more likely to carry his point with the Duke of Brittany by dropping all entreaties and making a plain demand on his pledged allegiance. It appeared that he was right, for Alan, after a moment of seeming irresolution, said, hastily:

"Well, 't is a matter of no great importance. Have your way, my Lord!"

He beckoned the churlish jailer to approach, and with a motion of his hand toward the fettered Flemish youth, commanded, briefly:

"Remove his manacles."

The jailer, without a change of his impassive countenance, obeyed the order, and stolidly went back to his place below the dais.

The young Fleming had not spoken, but he dropped his aching arms beside him, with a sigh of comfort, as he gazed in grateful wonder on the unfamiliar features of the boy whose potent intercession had gained him this relief; and Gareth of Nantes, drawing near, said to him, in a low voice:

"IT IS THE DUKE OF NORMANDY."

Count Eric started as he heard this title, and sharply caught his breath; his eyes dilated, and for one instant he shrank away from Richard as if in mortal terror. But, quickly recovering his calmness, he raised his head again, and met the Boy Duke's eyes with a look of sad but patient resignation.

Richard at that moment was forcibly reminded of his recent meeting with Guy de Briancourt. Here was another boy, as young and as proudly-born as he, and also suffering for his father's wickedness, who bore himself as bravely as had the robber-Baron's son, and in a worse extremity of trouble; but, to Richard's mind, Eric of Arras, in his silent submission to the cruel fate, so wholly undeserved, from which he saw no prospect of escape, seemed to present a type of courage far more touching than the fierce defiance and bitter scorn of pain which marked the bearing of his own young vassal. Eric also suffered without flinching, but he suffered without anger; and though his pale lips uttered no complaint, they smiled upon his friend. Richard's heart was moved, not only with pity for his woes, but even more with admiration for his quiet fortitude.

It was plain to see what thought was in the mind of the son of Arnulf the Wicked as he stood before the son of William Longsword; for this boy Duke had power to hasten the moment of his death, or to lengthen out his end in lingering pangs of torture; and, according to the cruel customs too common at that time, he had excuse enough for either course.

"The Duke of Normandy!" said Eric, slowly, looking from Gareth to Richard, and back again to Gareth, and then gazing at his own slim hands, freed from their galling chains, as if he wondered why the Duke of Normandy had done him so much kindness.

"Ay!" said Alan, harshly. "Look well upon him, Fleming; 't is my young, orphaned Lord, whose father should still be living to command my service, but for the bloody deed of your red-handed sire! And for what purpose, think you, has the Duke of Normandy come hither at this time?"

Eric sighed, but he answered with a steady voice:

"He has come, perhaps, to demand my speedy death."

"Your death!" growled Alan. "If it were so, he might have quickly had his will! But he asks for that which I am not so willing to allow. He asks that you may live!"

"That I may live?" repeated Eric.

"Ay, well may you marvel to hear so strange a story, but it is true," said Alan. "Richard of Normandy is here to intercede for you!"

Eric again repeated, blankly:

"Richard of Normandy—to intercede for me!"

"Yes, Count Eric," said Richard, in his gentle voice; "for it would grieve me, more than I can say, if one so noble and so unoffending as yourself should meet so sad a fate. If I have any influence with my good friend, the Duke of Brittany, I trust you will be spared."

"My Lord," said Alan, impatiently, "I trust you will not put your influence with me to such unworthy use. 'T would be a fine tale, in sooth, for Raoul de Chateaux to tell the Count of Blois that he might have spared his pains, for Alan of Brittany dared not carry out his threat, for fear of Arnulf's vengeance!"

"Nay, Duke," said Richard, smiling, the man who told that tale would meet with little credit anywhere. It is known too well that

(Continued on 24 page.)

THE Lost Army.

Scouting and Fighting Adventures of Two Boys IN MISSOURI AND ARKANSAS IN 1861, '62.

The Boys Liberate Cordelia's Lover and Brother.

GEN. CURTIS'S NAVY.

BY THOMAS W. KNOX,
Author of "The Boy Travelers," "The Young Nimrods," "The Voyage of the Vivian," "Fulton and Steam Navigation," "Decisive Battles Since Waterloo," "Marco Polo for Boys and Girls," etc., etc.

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CHAPTER XLIV.

RETURNING CORDELIA'S KINDNESS—JACK AND HARRY ON A NAVAL EXPEDITION.

UT though he opened his eyes with astonishment, he did not open his lips to say why he did so. To have done so would have been imprudent to the last degree.

The question to the prisoner had revealed the fact that the captive whom Harry was so closely guarding was the son of Mr. Jones, the treacherous host from whom the two youths had such a narrow escape, and the brother of the girl who had given them the hint which led to their hasty departure. He had joined Price's army, as originally intended, and was serving with a cavalry regiment that had been assigned to the duty of harassing the Union forces and preventing their obtaining the supplies they desired. His company was the one with which the Union cavalry had disputed the possession of the haystack, as described in the last chapter.

"Now, thought Harry, 'I've got a chance to pay off the girl for her kindness to us. I'll get her brother free and send him home to her. He'll never know how it came about, but I'm sure she'll understand.'"

Further questioning showed that another of the prisoners was a near neighbor of young Jones, and that he was very much attached to Miss Cordelia; in fact, the twain were



TAKING THE OATH.

lovers, and this circumstance determined Harry on his course of action, and on the way to Batesville he studied how best to accomplish his object.

He found that the young fellows were heartily tired of the war, and wanted to go home; this was particularly the case with the young lover, whose interest was greatly roused when he found that Harry had seen the girl he left behind him. Harry gave no particulars of his acquaintance with her, other than that he had stopped at the house of Mr. Jones on his way from Springfield to Forsyth, and remembered seeing a young girl such as the prisoner described, or rather such as her brother told about. He said he could not remember the name, but thought it was Corinne, or Cor—something or other.

The prisoners were fearful that something terrible would happen to them, as they had heard the usual wild stories about the barbarity of the Yankees. Harry encouraged their belief as far as he thought judicious, in order to make them all the more grateful for any service he might render them. He promised to do his best to save them from being hanged or shot, and suggested that a great deal would depend on their conduct.

"If you try to escape," said he, "you will be shot down at once; but if you obey orders and do exactly what is told you without question, you'll find it to your advantage."

They promised everything he asked of them, and on reaching camp they went demurely to the quarters assigned them, and made not the least trouble. As soon as he was relieved of his charges Harry went straight to Gen. Vandever and asked to see him privately, a request which the General readily granted.